

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of the claims in the application:

Listing of Claims

Claims 1-93 (cancelled).

94. (Currently amended) A polymer feedstock in the form of a cold-pressed tablet or pellet for use in extrusion of an extruded product containing PVA, the cold-pressed tablet or pellet comprising, by weight, a blend of:

40 to 70% PVA;

8 to 15% plasticizer;

0.5 to 1.5% internal lubricant;

0.0001 to 0.1% external lubricant; and

a solid particulate filler.

95. (Previously added) A polymer feedstock according to claim 94 wherein the internal lubricant comprises a fatty acid amide.

96. (Previously added) A polymer feedstock according to claim 95 wherein the fatty acid amide is a straight or branched C₁₂-C₂₄ fatty acid amide.

97. (Currently amended) A polymer feedstock according to claim 94 wherein the plasticiser is selected from the group consisting of ethylene glycol, glycerol, triethylene glycol, ~~low-molecular~~ weight polyethylene glycols and C₂-C₈ amides.

98. (Previously added) A polymer feedstock according to claim 94 wherein the filler comprises inert, inorganic material.

99. (Previously added) A polymer feedstock according to claim 94 wherein the filler comprises a superabsorbent material.

100. (Previously added) A polymer feedstock according to claim 94 wherein the filler comprises both an inert, inorganic material and superabsorbent material.

101. (Previously added) A polymer feedstock according to claim 98 wherein the inorganic filler comprises calcium carbonate.

102. (Currently amended) A polymer feedstock according to claim 94 comprising, by weight of the feedstock, up to 50% filler.

103. (Previously added) A polymer feedstock according to claim 94 wherein the external lubricant comprises a stearate.

104. (Currently amended) A PVA-containing polymer feedstock in the form of a cold-pressed tablet or pellet comprising, by weight of the feedstock:-

40 to 80% PVA;
5 to 50% solid particulate filler;
5 to 15% plasticizer; and
0.5 to 2.5% internal lubricant.

105. (Currently amended) A polymer feedstock according to claim 104, comprising, by weight of the feedstock:-

40 to 70% PVA;
20 to 50% solid particulate filler;
8 to 15% plasticizer;
0.5 to 1.5% internal lubricant; and
0.0001 to 0.1% external lubricant.

106. (Previously added) A polymer feedstock according to claim 104, wherein a fatty acid amide is provided as internal lubricant.

107. (Previously added) A polymer feedstock according to claim 105 wherein stearate is provided as external lubricant.

108. (Currently amended) A polymer feedstock according to claim 105 comprising, by weight of the feedstock:-

50 to 60% PVA ;

30 to 40% stearate-coated calcium carbonate;

8 to 15% glycerol;

0.5 to 1.5% octadecanamide; and

0.0001 to 0.1% zinc stearate.

109. (Currently amended) A polymer feedstock according to claim 94 prepared substantially without liquefying the bulk of the polymer granules melting of the PVA.

110. (Currently amended) A polymer feedstock according to claim 94 having a moisture content less than about 10% by weight of the feedstock but greater than 0.01% to bind the pellets or tablets.

111. (Previously added) A method of making a PVA-containing polymer feedstock according to claim 94 comprising blending the PVA with the plasticizer, the internal lubricant, the external lubricant and the filler, said internal lubricant including a fatty acid amide, in the presence of an amount of moisture sufficient to bind the polymer feedstock into tablets or pellets upon cold pressing and cold pressing the feedstock into tablets or pellets.

112. (Previously added) A method according to claim 111 comprising blending, in a high speed blender, the PVA and the internal lubricant.

113. (Previously added) A method according to claim 111 comprising adding moisture to the components to be blended.

114. (Previously added) A method according to claim 111 wherein PVA and lubricant are fed into a high speed mixer gravimetrically.

115. (Previously added) A method of making a PVA-containing polymer feedstock according to claim 111, wherein the filler comprises a superabsorbent material.

116. (Previously added) A method of extruding a PVA-containing polymer feedstock comprising forming a feedstock according to claim 94 and extruding the feedstock into a product, wherein the feedstock is prepared substantially without melting of the PVA.